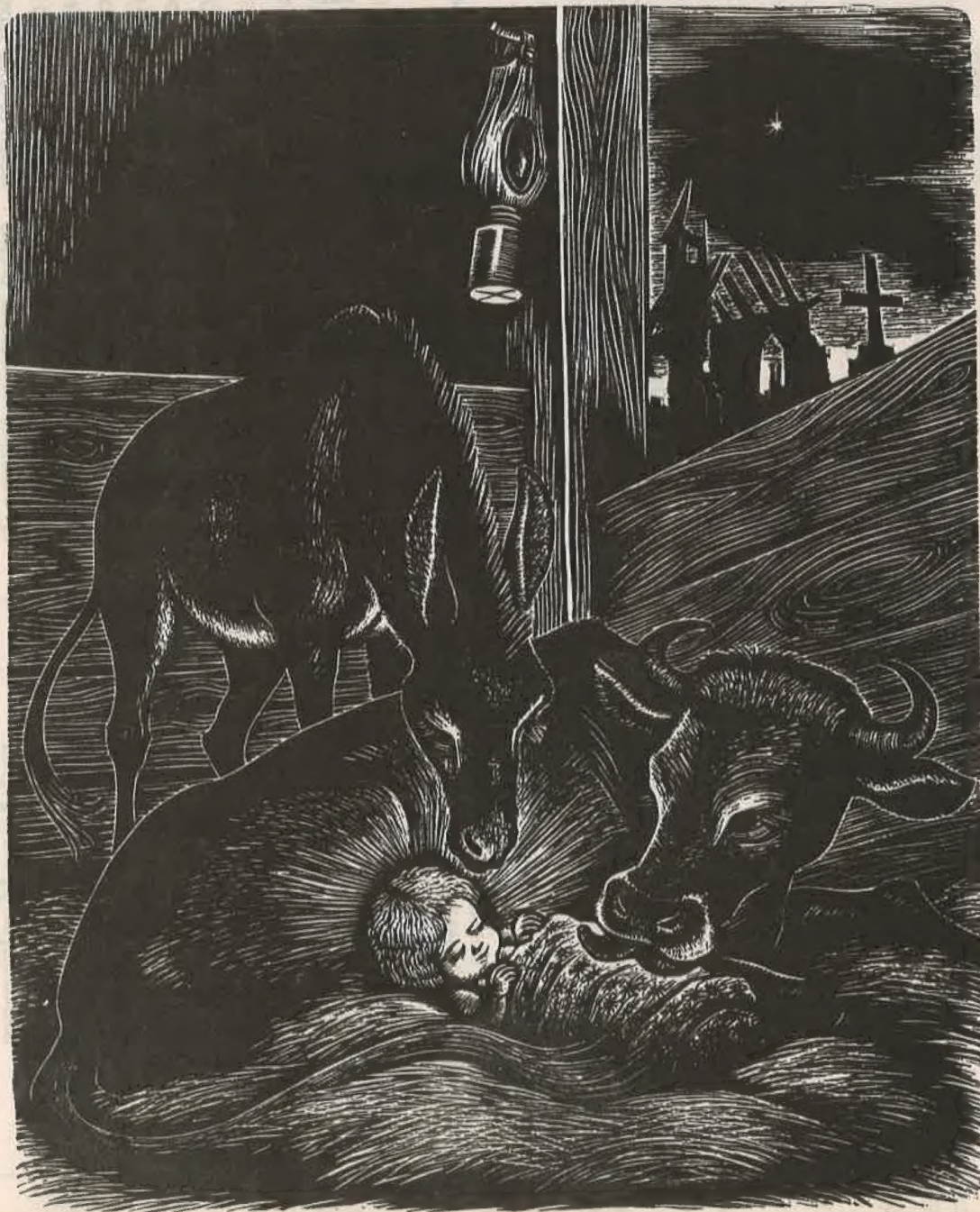


via pacis

Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

Volume 21, Number 4

Advent 1997



Seeing the Face of Christ in Everyone

by Matt McGarry

Editors' note: The following is an edited version of a report by Matt McGarry to the Des Moines Area Alumni Club (of Notre Dame University). Faithful via pacis readers will remember that Matt spent most of last summer with us. He came as a volunteer, but departed a member of our community. Although it was written as summer gave way to autumn this year, Matt truly captures the essence Advent in this composition.

As I reflect on my twelve-week stay at the Des Moines Catholic Worker House, I know my life can never be the same. I entered my Summer Service Project with some apprehensions and high hopes. On the plane to Des Moines I wrote, "I want to meet new people and hear their story. I want to extend some measure of assistance or comfort wherever I can. I want to make new friends and have new stories to tell. When I leave I hope people will say that I was a decent person who cared."

I had no idea of the extent to which my hopes would be fulfilled. I met extraordinary people whom I will never forget. My eyes were opened to injustice and suffering. My mind was opened to new ways of looking at people and their problems. Most importantly, my heart was opened to give and to receive the love of God through my brothers and sisters on earth. I have begun a journey that will last a lifetime, and that journey began in Des Moines, Iowa.

I arrived at the Des Moines Catholic Worker House on May 17, 1997 in the afternoon. The community is actually composed of three houses. Ligutti and Lazarus Houses provide long-term housing for Catholic Workers and several guests of the house. Dingman House, the main house, is a two-story, white, Victorian house located on the corner of Indiana and 7th Street, one of the worst neighborhoods in Des Moines. Dingman House is open to the public from twelve to seven everyday except Mondays and Wednesdays. Anyone is welcome to get a shower, watch

TV, use the computer, get a couple of days worth of groceries and personal items, use the phone, nap on a couch, have a cup of coffee, or just sit and talk. Dinner is served at six. At the beginning of the month, 30 or 40 people are served dinner. By the end of the month when welfare checks have run out, there may be as many as 70 people.

On Fridays, Capital City Fruit Co. donates a generous amount of produce which is then distributed to people in the neighborhood. I knew almost none of this when I arrived that sunny afternoon, but I knew that I was in a special place when I stepped into a kitchen filled with good smells, children's laughter, and smiling faces. I felt like I had come home.

Nothing I had known before my arrival could have prepared me for what was to come. My time in Des Moines was a genuine mixture of joy and hardship. There were times when I was soaringly high and others when I was crushingly low. For me though, most of the times were happy ones. In

separate these two parts of my life. On the one hand, I wanted to love my God, and on the other, I wanted to love my sisters and brothers. There was little relation between the two; they were mutually exclusive. It was only through coming to understand the relationship between others and myself through service and reflection that I realized that there is nothing so intimately tied as love of God and love of man.

One of the central tenets of Catholic Worker philosophy is to see the face of Christ in everyone, no matter how distressing the guise. We love our sisters and brothers not merely because they are our sisters and brothers, not simply because Jesus loves them, but because they are Jesus. This summer I finally began to really see God in others. So often in our society we are taught to seek out the worst in people to make ourselves feel and look better. But to look for the beauty in others makes it so much easier to love them, and to truly love people is to serve them in their time of need. And once you make that connection, the flood

much sadness and pain at the sight of the suffering of others. *Compassion* says that accepting who we are and giving up our competitiveness "allows us to enter so fully into the sufferings of others that it becomes possible for us to heal the sick and call the dead to life."

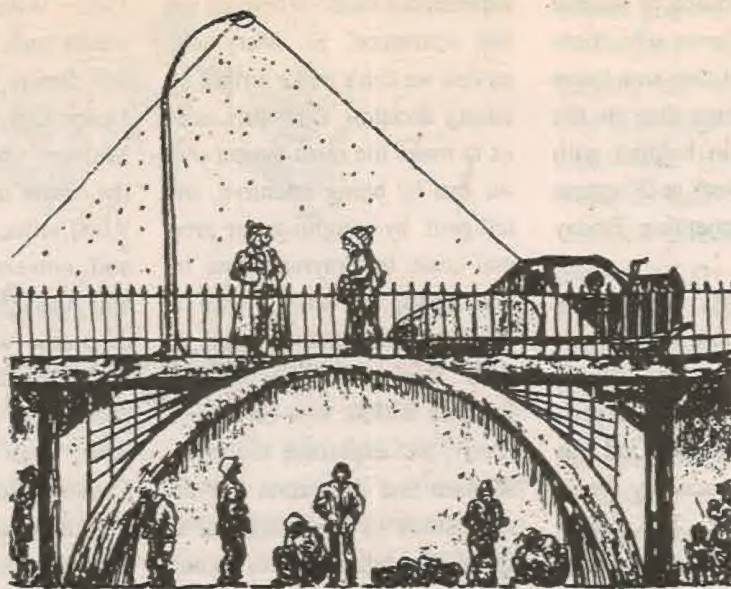
This was another striking revelation. I had always approached service with a certain aloofness. I was happy to help others out, but I wanted to maintain a certain distance so that their problems would not drag me down as well. Now I was being told that the only way for me to really help someone was to share in their sufferings. How could I expect to affect any change as a disinterested observer? If I was to share in the joy of giving and receiving unconditional love, I must first share in the suffering of the one I sought to help. So not all days were happy ones.

The most difficult and painful time during my stay occurred when a member of the House was asked to leave. She had come to us immediately after her release from prison. After several weeks, it became apparent that her behavior was making it impossible for her to continue living at the House. We were not offering the type of support that she needed, and she was hurting the other residents. Eventually she was asked to leave. It was a painful time for everyone.

Everyone living in the House wants to do everything possible to help House guests, particularly residents.

It would have been easier to just dismiss her problems as being her own fault and move on with my life. But I could not do that. She was my friend, and what she needed at the point was a friend and supporter. So I stood up for her as best I could, realizing that the outcome was both necessary and inevitable. I tried as best I could to listen, not to judge, and to be compassionate. Ultimately, that compassionate listening without judgment is the most important mission of the house.

People can come to the Catholic Worker House and receive a brief respite from the struggle that comes with facing



his book, *Doing the Truth in Love*, Michael Himes talks frequently about God as *Agape*, the Greek word for unconditional, self-emptying love. Himes says, "We cannot experience God unless we love our brothers and sisters, and we cannot love our brothers and sisters without experiencing God. ... *Agapic* love is experienced as a gift not only by the one loved but also by the lover." This is the single most important thing I will take away from this summer.

Before I came to Des Moines, I had always tried to

gates open, and there is no turning back.

Before the first day was even over, I was overwhelmed by the sense of peace and joy that permeated the House. I was eager to begin the process of "self-emptying" that both of the assigned texts so frequently spoke of. I began to empty myself of the petty competitiveness, the pride and the fear which would stand in the way of my helping anyone other than myself.

Lest I paint too rosy a picture, let me say that along with the joy of serving, there came

Continued on page 5

Third Annual Bishop Dingman Peace Award and Banquet

Friday Feb. 27, 1998

6:00 p.m.

Dowling High School

1400 Buffalo Rd

West Des Moines, IA



Peace Award Recipient: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Des Moines Chapter

Featured Speaker: Jim Wallis; Editor of *Sojourners Magazine*

Tickets are \$25 each. This annual award banquet is a fund-raiser for Catholic Peace Ministries, an ecumenical peace and justice organization.

For tickets and more information write or call the CPM office at 4211 Grand Ave, Des Moines IA 50312; phone: (515) 255-8114

* Holiday Appeal *

Our apologies for the lateness of this issue of *vp*. We are not immune, it seems, to the stresses of the modern age. Like most folks, we never seem to be granted enough hours in the day to get everything done. You read this publication, you know how much we do.

That said, we must quickly add that at the end of the day (most days), it doesn't feel like we've only hit the "pause" switch on a treadmill, only to have it—and us—running pointlessly again tomorrow. Because we have community because we try as best we can to practice daily the Works of Mercy, because we have faith in what is to come, the work becomes worship, our daily lives prayerful.

We invite you to share in our life-affirming work. Please feel free to stop by the house and spend some time as a volunteer. Of course, we need financial support as well. However, we are not tax-exempt because this is our home, not an agency. To all of our friends who have already been generous with time and cash, we are more than grateful.

Happy Holidays

— the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

Meet Meredith . . .

Greetings and salutations! My name is Meredith Bruns, and I am the newest member of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community.

What's my story you may ask? I was born and raised in a small town on Long Island (aka "strong island") called Floral Park. Many wonder how on earth I wound up in the heart of America coming from the Big Apple. In rare moments of clarity I remember that it was during the summer of 1996 while applying to the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) that it all happened.

I had graduated from Holy Cross College in Worcester, Mass that spring and had decided that I wanted to spend a year dedicating my life to the values of community, spirituality, simple living and social justice. But there were very few volunteer opportunities left in California, where I originally had my heart set on going. To

make a long story short, I wound up working for the rabble-rousers otherwise known as Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement right here in Des Moines. I lived with three other vivacious volunteers, and together we were introduced to the crazy Catholic Workers on the weekend of the DMCW's 20th anniversary celebration and Carla's wedding in August 1996. I didn't know who these people were, but they sure knew how to party! From then on, the four of us began helping with dinner once a week at Dingman House and frequenting Friday night Masses.

Last February, after seeing *Haunted by God*, a one-woman performance on the life of Dorothy Day, I began to seriously listen to whether God was calling me to actually be a Catholic Worker. The movement mystified me, and I heard God whispering sweet invitations through the spirits of all

those who keep the movement alive and breathing today.

It wasn't until late April that I got a clear answer. Sr. Mary Dingman of all people was a guest speaker at our JVC spring retreat. She spoke about "discernment," or making decisions about where God wants us to be. She asked us to ponder such questions as: What brings us consolation? What brings us desolation? Where can we best use our gifts? Where have we experienced God? Where do we feel resistance? Sr. Mary told us that we can't make a right or wrong decision. God only asks us to make the most honest one we can by being attentive, intelligent, by weighing our pros and cons, by praying about it, and finally by sitting with a decision and seeing how it feels. Decisions come from a freedom within, said Sr. Mary. Lastly, she explained that consolation and desolation can be understood in the image of a spiral. Consolation takes us out of ourselves, while desolation takes us into ourselves. I knew

that the Catholic Worker would challenge and humble me to grow and blossom by giving of myself to others. I had already seen the face of God in so many people I had met through the Worker.

But where have I been since August when I finished JVC? I was actually on a recruiting extravaganza for JVC: Midwest. They hired me at the end of August to travel the Midwest and spread the good news about JVC. After spending four weeks back in New York with my family, I headed to the Motor City, home of the JVC: Midwest headquarters. Over the course of 10 weeks, I drove 9,000 miles, visited 33 colleges and universities in 11 states, and filled the ears of thousands of people with tales about the JVC "ruined for life" experience. And who knows, I may have even recruited a few Catholic Workers.

All in all I am WAY excited to be here! I would like to thank all those who make up the CW community (you know

who you are) for welcoming and the other JVs into the family last year. Although I wonder where my place will be here, I believed Mike when he said "You'll get in where you belong." And though I feel pressure to "be effective" in some way, I am comforted by the words of Dorothy Day:

What we do here is so little, but it is like the little seed with a few loaves and fish. Christ took that little and increased it. He will do the same. What we do is so little we seem to be constantly failing. But so did He fail. He met an apparent failure on the cross. But unless the seed fall into the earth and die, there is no harvest. And why must we suffer? Our work is to sow, and another generation will reap the harvest.

I suppose that is what it's all about. The small everyday attempts to nourish and love another ... and to hope catches on.

— Meredith Bruns



via pacis

Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

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Msgr. Ligutti House 1301 - 8th Street
Lazarus House 1317 - 8th Street

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Friday Night Liturgy
at the Des Moines Catholic Worker
7:30 p.m. - Bishop Dingman House, 1310 - 7th Street



Come celebrate the Eucharist and spend time with friends

Everyone is Welcome!

Community News

by Carla Dawson-Ngamo

Everyone!

I'm not late with my article this time — a first in a long time. I hope everyone is doing well. This snow we've had in Iowa is really something. Thank God for El Nino." We at the Worker have been extremely busy with Thanksgiving, Advent and the snow, not mentioning the roof.

We have also been doing a lot of hospitality for out-of-town friends. Over Halloween we had folks from Wisconsin and South Dakota stay with us. On Day, a long-time activist, stayed with us over the weekend. He and Fr. Frank were meeting around talking to college and high school students about civil disobedience. He is an awesome man. He has such a wealth of information to share and is very willing to do so. My sons thought he was phat and are looking forward to his next visit.

Relative Minor, the band from Wisconsin, put on a concert on Saturday, the first of

November. It was a very joyous gathering. Barb Kass and Mike Miles and their daughter, Emma, also stayed over. They had a lot of info to share with us about JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps) and how they're weasling their way into high schools. We would like to thank Chet Guinn for the use of the Fire Station and Bob Notman-Cook and the congregation for the use of Gatchel Church. Without their facilities we would not have been able to have such a wonderful weekend.

Jerry Ebner, Michael Sprong and Beth Preheim from South Dakota also were with us Halloween weekend. Michael and Beth facilitated a well-attended nonviolent direction action training.

Jerry Ebner, who visited at Halloween, was also with us for Thanksgiving. He's very handy with a leaf blower. Thanks a bunch Jerry. See ya soon.

Maria and Baby Carla were with us over the Thanksgiving week. We were blessed and happy to see them.

Our friends from Eagle Grove and Clarion came down to visit. They brought about 300 pairs of shoes. God bless you Denis. You can come visit even when you don't bring us stuff. It was good to see you.

Joanne was here the week before Thanksgiving. If you didn't get to see her, she sends love to all in Iowa. She had a week full of catching up with friends. It was great to have her here, but it made us realize how very much we miss her. Jo, you are never far from our hearts and minds. Make us proud in NY.

Meredith Bruns, a former Jesuit Volunteer, is now a Catholic Worker with us. She's only been with us a short time, but she seems to be working out just fine. Glad you're with us.

Now on to what we've all be up to: Eddie, as always, has been keeping the house clean and running. He's our rock. He's been helping Lyle at Home Recycling and taking his walks.

Michael has still been working up at Mid-K. He went with Fr. Frank to Las Vegas for the 100th Dorothy Day anniversary. (See article.)

My sons, Julius, Joshua, and Jordan, have had a busy fall. Julius broke his ankle playing football with some of his buddies. His ankle is healing now. He only has to wear an ankle sock when he plays ball or in gym class. He has been receiving very good grades. His eighth grade basketball team is 6-0. They are trying to win the championship by going 9-0. I wish them luck.

Joshua is doing very well. He has been chosen to be in Talented and Gifted (TAG). He's a wonderful artist. He and Jordan have been going to the YMCA after school. They are taking swimming lessons and look like little fish.

Jordan drew and painted a 10-foot tall giraffe for a project at school. It hangs in the hallway so everyone can see it. It sure makes me proud that my sons are growing up to be nice young men. They always bring a smile to the people who visit.

Richard is just getting ready to take finals, so we have not seen very much of him lately. We ask that everyone keep him in your prayers.

Norman has been busy keeping our basement organized and clean. It is an awesome task. He has had help from Grinnell students. The Grinnell students also put up plastic on the windows. Our houses are very much warmer because of their help. Thanks a million Grinnellians.

I've been very busy working at Moulton Elementary School Headstart, working at the Worker, traveling to Ft. Benning, serving as PTA president, SBC chairperson, wife, mother and so on. I'm looking forward to two weeks off my job at



Moulton.

We had a beautiful Thanksgiving thanks to many folks. Kevin Cameron and Dave Fleming brought us enough food for a feast. Rob Barron, a Roosevelt senior, brought over some friends and made fruit salad, deviled eggs, green bean casserole and other delicious foods. Bob and Eddie peeled about 85 pounds of potatoes.

To the mother of the two daughters and the secretary at Visitation and her fiance and son, Joshua, thanks a million for all your help. Thanksgiving would not have been as thankful without you.

Now on to a more serious topic. We are in the process of getting a new roof. It will cost \$7,900. We need your help very badly. We have also found out we need a new furnace. You know the old saying, "When it rains, it pours." We at the Worker say, "If one thing needs fixed, there are probably ten more that need fixing too!" So if you're a furnace person or happen to have a few dollars that need a home, we could sure put either to good use.

We know that without your generous help, we would not be able to do "God's work." So we at the Worker as always leave everything up to God and prayer.

I hope everyone will have a joyous Holiday season. So keep us in your prayer and have a safe and happy winter.



Norman's Whereabouts

It's the Christmas season. Houses are decorated with lines of colorful lights and fantasy ornaments. Crowds of people flocking to malls and stores to buy Christmas gifts or things they need. Now they may stop to listen to someone singing Christmas carols, songs about the true meaning of Christmas — the birth of a child born some two thousand years ago, born in what we now call a barn, a child who later would die on a cross for our sins.

To me, his words live on. He taught about peace and love, sharing what we have with others no matter who they are, even those whom we dislike and those whom we call our enemies. He also taught us how to die, not to kill.

There is a lot more to Christmas than the buying and giving of gifts. There's the helping of others that are less fortunate, praising of others

who hardly ever get praise for their work, and more. Christmas is something that we ought to do more than once a year.

For the last six years I rang the bells for the Salvation Army. This year I'm taking a break and enjoying the season a little more while I try to earn some money to buy a new (used) car. It'll be a while. Recently, the car the community gave me broke down. So I sent it to be looked at and to find out what it would cost to repair. When I found out that it might have cost me more than what I had, I thought about making payments as it was being repaired.

However, as it sat outside at the service station, someone shot out the windows. The owner of the station was upset. So I decided to tow the car home and then I decided to junk it. Both the owner and I had a lot of mixed feelings. He didn't charge me for his labor

or the towing.

Instead of getting angry at him for what happened to the car, I told him I wished the world was a little better place. I never told him that I was going to find someone who would fix it in payments. A friend of mine, told me that no one does that anymore, so I'm back at working on another dream.

As for work, I like my job and plan on keeping at it for a while. As for my diabetes, well I guess I'm doing okay for now. Before I end this article, I would like to say to you: May there be some loving joy, no matter how much or how little, let there be joy. May we pray for others in the spirit of brotherly and sisterly love, and may there be some peace in the coming New Year for all. And may our Lord be with you always.

— Norman Searah



PAUL CONRAD/Los Angeles Times

You shall find him wracked by hunger and dying in the Third World.

Dorothy Day Commemoration: Workers, Academics, Admirers Meet in Milwaukee

by Fr. Frank Cordaro

This year's most formal and academic gathering in honor of Dorothy Day's 100th birthday was sponsored by Marquette University and the Catholic Worker Archives. The event was held on the Marquette University campus in Milwaukee on the weekend of October 9-11. Well over 500 people were in attendance.

It was a great gathering of past and current Catholic Workers, friends and acquaintances of Dorothy Day, and lots of academic types: folks who have never been Catholic Workers nor ever knew Dorothy Day but who have studied her life and the movement she inspired.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community was represented by Ed Bloomer, Norman Searah, and myself. Former DMCW members in attendance included Michael Sprong, Joe DaVia and Jacquee Dickey; the latter two are co-founders, along with myself, of the DMCW. This was the first time

that Joe, Jacquee and I have been together at the same time in 17 years! It was great fun seeing them both again. A big thank-you to Joe and his family for giving Eddie Bloomer and myself hospitality during the conference.

Many workshops and formal papers were presented covering a wide range of related issues. There was a good mix of workshop presenters representing "actual Catholic Workers," personal friends of Dorothy Day, alongside the academic types. The high point of the conference was the formal sit-down dinner Friday night during which the keynote address, titled "Dorothy Day as I knew Her," was given by Jim Forest, a former editor of the *Catholic Worker* paper and close friend of Dorothy Day.

The Conference itself received mixed reviews from many active Catholic Workers who attended. Although Peter Maurin often said that the Catholic Worker is where the scholar and worker must meet, I'm not sure that present-day

Marquette University is the meeting ground Peter had in mind. This confusion of place was highlighted most clearly during an unofficial Catholic Worker's Anti-ROTC vigil and witness on the Marquette campus the Friday afternoon of the conference.

For the past 15 years the folks from the Milwaukee Casa Maria Catholic Worker Community have demonstrated against the presence of ROTC on Marquette University's campus. About 50 Catholic Workers from the conference joined with members of Casa Maria for an hour-long vigil at noon on the corner of 16th and Wisconsin Avenue, a main intersection on Marquette's campus.

The leaflet used during the vigil gave three reason main reasons for the demonstration: 1) A Christian institution should be training students in nonviolence. ROTC teaches doing violence to the enemy while Christian teaching is to love your enemies and do good to those who hate you and do harm to you. 2) Marquette University could offer scholarships other than that of ROTC and has continually refused to do so. 3) No student in a Christian institution should be put in a position of doing violence to another or having violence done to them for the sake of getting an education. If an institution calls itself a Christian institution it should be teaching the Gospel of Christ and not sponsoring an ROTC program that has a philosophy directly in contradiction to the teachings of Jesus.

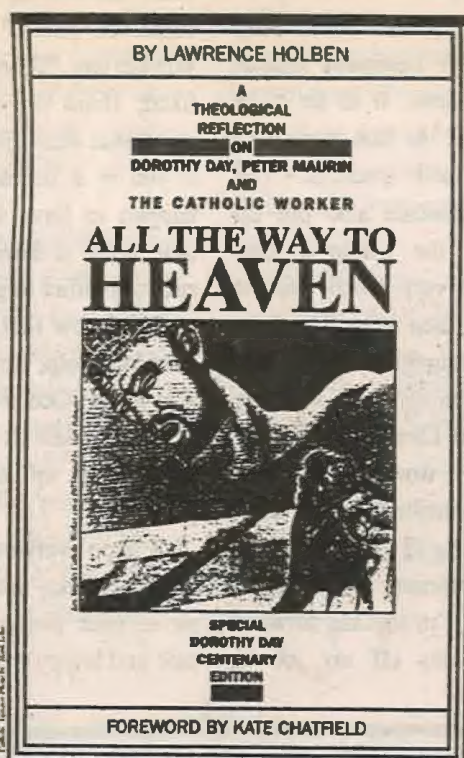


Following the noon-hour vigil and leafleting, the demonstrators proceeded to the ROTC building on campus. Fifteen Catholic Workers entered the building and occupied the main hallway servicing the ROTC offices. Previous anti-ROTC demonstrations at Marquette had never reached the inside of the ROTC building. In the past, any demonstrators attempting to enter or block the entrance of the ROTC building were immediately arrested. There were no arrests this time.

The occupation continued until 5:00 p.m. when the building was closing. The Marquette security people were prepared to wait us out beyond the 5:00 p.m. closing time, but we decided to end the occupation at that time and rejoin the

rest of the conference, our sage sent. (Silly Jesuits. I should have known better. I can't invite a bunch of Catholic Workers on to a Catholic campus and not expect us to demonstrate against the presence of ROTC.)

Big thank-you's to Runkel and the folks at Catholic Worker Archives masterminded the conference and did all the work to bring about. Despite the affluent, institutionally flawed setting, Phil and folks at the Catholic Worker Archives did everything they could to make the conference Catholic Worker friendly: lining up hospital and floor space for folks who need it. The conference, it was free, including the morning and Friday night banquet.

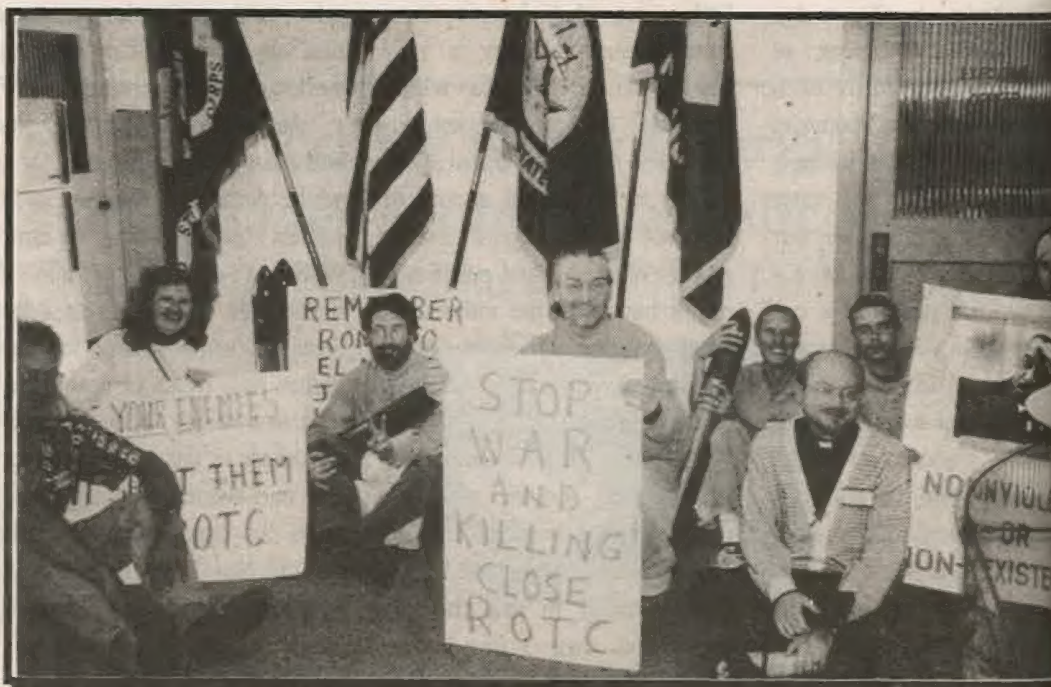


We strongly recommend *All the Way to Heaven* to all our readers. This "theological reflection" is easy to read, simple to understand, but not simplistic. On the contrary, Lawrence Holben's diagram of the spiritual underpinnings and philosophical foundations of the CW movement is extremely thorough. Holben not only deals with early movement thought and action, he also exposes the reader to contemporary CW ideas in order to demonstrate that the CW remains a dynamic and vigorous movement.

This book is a collaborative effort of Rose Hill Books (a CW publisher) and the Los Angeles CW. Your purchase of this book supports efforts to live-out and spread the word about the CW vision.

paperback, 164 pages
retail price: \$10.00 + \$2.50 shipping

To order: Rose Hill Books, 28291 - 444th Ave.,
Marion, SD 57043; phone: 1-800-43-PEACE



Several Catholic Workers sang, prayed and got to know one another better during their occupation of the ROTC building on Marquette University campus. Their motto: "Nonviolent resistance in the Catholic Worker tradition — it's not just academic." Photo by Fr. Frank Cordaro

Catholic Workers Gather to Celebrate Dorothy Day's Centenary

by Jean Basinger

Catholic Workers from across the country gathered in Las Vegas on the weekend of Nov. 7 - 9 to celebrate the 100th birthday of Catholic Worker co-founder Dorothy Day. It seemed appropriate that the life of a person so dedicated to nonviolence would be celebrated at the center of some of the world's greatest acts of violence.

Roundtable discussions, in the Catholic Worker tradition, were held on Friday and Saturday. Murphy Davis, a Presbyterian pastor and member of Open Door Community in Atlanta (GA), was a keynote speaker. The Open Door is a "Protestant" community in the CW tradition. In addition to doing hospitality with the homeless, Murphy is well-

known for her counseling and visitation of death row inmates.

She told us that the homeless of Atlanta are now called "urban campers." They can't set their belongings on the sidewalk without risking having them taken by the police. She also told us the stories of some of the people who have received the death penalty in Georgia. One mentally retarded man was examined by a judge to see if he was impaired enough to escape the death penalty. The judge asked what the word "sanctuary" means. The prisoner replied, "a safe place." On that basis the judge determined that he was competent enough to be put to death.

On Saturday night we had a party with music provided by Charlie King, Relative Minor, a band from Luck, Wisconsin

and the Hennacy House Band from L.A. providing the music. Catholic Workers do know how to have fun even though it has been suggested that Dorothy was pretty serious about life.

On Sunday a group of nearly 300 met outside the gates of the nuclear test site for a liturgy that was celebrated by our own Father Frank and by two young women. We then formed a procession, and 150 crossed the line and were arrested.

Many ask why we are still protesting at the Test Site when President Clinton has signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The truth is that the United States set off two "low yield" tests in June and September. We have moved on to a new generation of weapons and are spending more money on weapons and tests than ever



Iowan's in the "men's side" of the holding pen for those arrested at the Nevada Test Site. Pictured here (from left to right): Rick Mihm, Fr. Frank Cordaro, Bill Basinger, Brian Terrell, Mike Burrell. Photo by Michael Sprong

before. We hope to eliminate the use of plutonium and use fusion. The lab at Livermore (CA) has begun the work on the new National Ignition Lab. They have been slowed down because when they began to dig at the site, they discovered many canisters of nuclear waste

which were buried there years ago before records of such activities were kept!

Iowa folk arrested at the Test Site were Rick Mihm from the Dubuque CW, Jean and Bill Basinger, Fr. Frank Cordaro, Mike Burrell, and Brian Terrell.

Seeing the Face of Christ in Everyone

Continued from page 1

each day. They can say their piece without fear of judgment and just be human for a time. Poverty can be incredibly dehumanizing. It will strip you of your dignity, your spirit and your humanity. I checked into a downtown homeless shelter one night to see what it was like and was deeply disturbed by what I found. I was just a number, a body that would fill a bed that the government would give the shelter about eight dollars for.

I truly appreciated how important it must be to be able to come to the House and be amongst friends, if only for a little while. I spent one Friday evening listening to a man vent his rage. He was an occasional house guest who had recently been stabbed twice and nearly killed. He was filled with hate and vengeance and needed someone to tell his story to, someone to care. So I sat and listened, cried with him, gave him a hug good night, and prayed that all of his wounds would heal.

It was in times like this that I would begin to despair. Whenever I began to wonder what I could possibly do among so much hopelessness, I re-

membered my favorite quote by Mother Teresa, "The whole work is only a drop in the ocean. But if I didn't drop in, the ocean would be one drop less." I would also think of the times when I had done something positive, however small it may have been.

One night, a friend and I were in the process of moving a woman who lived across the street into the House. She had been evicted because she refused to pay her rent until the landlord did something about the drugs and prostitution that were passing through the apartments.

While we were carting things across the street, a man came to the door looking for help. Immediately I noticed the flaming swastika tattooed on his head. Almost as quickly, I realized that whomever he was, he was in need of some assistance. So we gathered together some water, food, a sheet, and one of my two pairs of shoes. He had none, so how could I allow myself to have two.

I didn't think about it until he was on his way. His smile and handshake sent a jolt through me. I would have done it again even if he had spit in my face, but in that instant, I

looked him in the eye, and we were brothers. There was no separation by education, wealth, ideology, religion — nothing. Then he was gone, and I will never see him again. But I will carry him with me for the rest of my days.

There was another night I will never forget. It was after the house had closed, and I was watching TV with a couple of friends. I was elected to go to Quiktrip to bring back food. I was very hungry and bought myself a big sandwich. I recorded the rest in my journal: "On my home I saw Tracy, a hooker, working across the street. It occurred to me that she might be hungry so I offered her the sandwich I had just bought. Initially she said no, then she hesitated and ended up taking the sandwich. I didn't make a big deal of it, just gave her a 'God bless' and said good night."

Michael Himes talks a lot about human "brokenness" and how accepting and coming to terms with that is a good thing. At that moment, Tracy and I were both broken, and we knew it. She was hungry; and she still had to turn tricks. I was helpless to do anything more than give her a stupid sand-

wich. But we were broken in a different way.

It is like the distinction Dorothy Day drew between poverty and destitution. My brokenness was good. I realized my shortcomings. I could strive to do more while relying on God to support me. But her brokenness was cloaked in desperation and hopelessness. It is the job of the people like you and me to help remove that grim specter, so that all people may stand on level ground, seeing their imperfections and rejoicing in them. Because through God and our brothers and sisters, flaws come together with strengths to form perfection. That is why even now I know I will return to Des Moines next summer.

I did not know why I went to Des Moines in the first place. One of my major goals over the summer was to figure out exactly what had drawn me to that quiet city. I had reasons I gave to the inquisitive; I wanted to do something worthwhile with my summer, it was a chance to get out of my hometown, the scholarship didn't hurt.

I believe now that I was drawn to Des Moines for reasons I would never had under-

stood before I arrived there. I went to find my vocation. I went to finally start living life to the hilt. I went to find myself and realize that I had to recognize those around me to know who I really was. I went because to not have gone would have been to deny who I am. I went because if I had not, I would never have met many people who have put their mark on my soul.

Whatever really drew me to Des Moines, I thank God for taking me there. A spark was struck somewhere inside of me on May 17, 1997. That spark has grown into a fire and spread through me. It is begun. I am forever indebted to those who enabled me to participate in my Summer Service Project — the staff at the CSC, the Des Moines Alumni Club and my alumni rep Chris, and my friends at Capital City Fruit Co. I hope that what I do with the knowledge and energy I have gained this summer will be a testament to those who believed in me. It is only now that I understand what Michael Himes meant when he said "that when we love another as selflessly as we can, what we are doing is the least wrong way to name God." Thank you all.

The Call for Church Justice

Update on Fr. Frank's (threatened) excommunication

This summer's "flap" over my threatened excommunication order from Bishop Bruskewitz of Lincoln has pretty much died down. (See *vp* Volume 21, Number 3, Summer 1997). I have not returned, nor do I plan to return to the Lincoln Diocese any time soon. Moreover, if I did go back, it would not be with a desire to function in any official priestly capacity.

I would, however, reconsider a return to the Lincoln Diocese to challenge the Bishop's threat of excommunication only if the effort would help the reform movement

within the Church and only if other priests would join me. I suffered no direct negative consequences in my own diocese nor with Bishop Joseph Charron because of my threatened excommunication. This is not to say that my efforts in Lincoln and on behalf of Church reform are well received by Bishop Charron. They are not. Iowa Call to Action is still not allowed to meet or host any events on Catholic property in the Des Moines Diocese. Dialogue between Iowa Call to Action and Bishop Charron is currently at a standstill.



Art by Spencer Levv

Women in Scripture

The following are excerpts from the book *Rising with Christ, Catholic Women's Voices Across the World* by the late Msgr. Thoralf Thielen; edited by Kevin Koch (Rose Hill Books, Marion, SD). In this volume Thielen interviews Catholic women from several countries, primarily in Africa and Asia.

KENYA

Korby: How do you feel about Christ? Did he treat women and men equally, or did he want to and wasn't able to, or what?

Woman: When you look at the Gospels, we find great hope. We find that the way Jesus treated the women was counter-cultural. For example, you know, if a woman had committed adultery, according to the Jewish law, she was supposed to be killed. OK, but Jesus kind of says, OK,

Korby: OK, don't do it again.

Woman: Don't do it again. But actually he makes this woman realize that she is something. I'm sure that she never knew that she was anything. But this man here makes her feel that she is somebody.

Korby: She is somebody. Right. He went counter-cultural there. He cut through taboos. Sure. And sending Mary Magdalene to the apostles.

Woman: I know. And Jesus, the way he talks to her, deep theology. And even revealed himself to her in the Resurrection.

Korby: Yeah. Yeah, I've heard it said that the way we see him treating women is really another sign of his divinity. Because he could not have done it and gotten away with it if he hadn't been divine.

From the National CTA Conference Program:

Following the Nonviolent Jesus: A Call for a Resistance Church

Fr. Frank Cordaro speaks from experience as Catholic Worker, nuclear resister and parish priest. Using history and literary criticism, he sees Jesus as a radical, non-violent, egalitarian reformer, and calls us to embrace the nonviolent spirit of Jesus. He links nonviolence and sexism in the Church, and call for a Resistance Church movement within the larger Church of prophetic small communities.

Anyone interested in purchasing an audio tape recording of my workshop should send \$6 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling to:

Chesapeake Audio/Video Communications, Inc.
6330 Howard Ln.
Elkridge, MD 21075
ph: (410) 796-0040.

Report from National CTA Conference

This year's National Call To Action (CTA) Conference in Detroit (November 14-16) was a great spirit-lifter for me. Three-thousand, five-hundred people attended this year's conference the theme of which was, "A Spirituality for the 21st Century."

Twenty-five folks from Iowa attended the conference. Helen Oster, IA CTA's chairperson and long-time friend and support person of the Des Moines Catholic Worker was my traveling partner. We used Helen's car, and she shared with the driving. Helen stayed in a hotel across the street from the conference site, and I took advantage of the good hospitality of the Detroit Catholic Worker.

As usual, there were many great speakers and workshop presenters — to name just a few: Sr. Joan Chittister, Fr. Charles Curran, Sr. Maureen Fiedler, Bishop Thomas Gumblerton, Sr. Christine Schenk, Ched Myers, Rosemary Ruether, Jim Wallis and Fr Tissa Balasuriya, the excommunicated Catholic theologian from Sri Lanka. This year's CTA Award went to Pax Christi USA.

I was very happy with my own two presentations of my talk, "Following the Non-violent Jesus — A Call for a Resistance Church". I got good feedback from many who attended my presentations. I am grateful for the chance to present my understanding of Jesus and the nonviolent resistance movement he started almost 2,000 years ago.

SRI LANKA

Woman: Christ treated everybody the same, both men and women. He never treated the women badly, just because they are women. Say like with Mary Magdalene, he didn't reject her like men did. He helped her, he listened to her. With the other women, too. Even women that men considered bad or impure because of the culture. Those that were different he helped. They all were treated the same, equally.

Korby: What he did was to break through a lot of the Jew

The best part of the weekend was meeting and sharing with other CTA folks from over the country. Working Church reform can be a lonely and discouraging endeavor these days. Just getting together with others who share the same vision and hope for the Church was an empowering and spirit-lifting experience.

A Visit to Saginaw Catholic Worker

One thing I did find interesting at this year's conference was the many different ways that local CTA groups are treated from one diocese to the next. In some dioceses, CTA groups are welcomed by local bishops and allowed to use Catholic Church property. This is true in the Diocese of Saginaw Mi. That is why I welcomed an invite from Rev. Fr. Reigle and the Saginaw Catholic Worker community to come visit and talk at the Catholic Worker the Monday night after the Detroit CTA Conference.

While in Saginaw, I paid a visit to the local diocesan offices. I was invited to share at a noon round-table discussion for diocesan employees. They asked me to talk about my struggle for reform in the Catholic Church and to stay in the priesthood. About ten people participated. At the Catholic Worker Monday night, over 20 people showed up for my talk including Bishop Ken Untner. It was an honor to have him present.

— Fr. Frank Cordaro

ish taboos and the traditions guess that's the example gives us. We have to break through a lot of taboos.

Woman: It takes a lot of courage to break through taboos, to break customs in order to give freedom to the Church. But Jesus had to have courage.

Korby: Right. You just gave me another idea. What more of, I guess, is priests have the courage to break through the customs and taboos as Jesus did.

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walkin' the SOA descended Americas Columbus November 1997. I support a thousand soldiers wage war people — walkin' School is

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resistance notes

"We're gonna keep on walkin' forward"

by Jean Basinger

"We're gonna keep on walkin' forward and shut down the SOA!" Over 2,000 people descended on the School of the Americas at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia on Sunday, November 16, 1997. We gathered to send the message to our legislators and all those who support the School — where thousands of Latin American soldiers have been trained to wage war against their own people — that we will keep on walkin' forward until the School is shut down forever.

The day of November 16 was chosen because it was on this date in 1989 that five Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her granddaughter were slaughtered at the University of Central America in San Salvador, El Salvador. The master minds of their deaths were graduates of the SOA.

On November 13, about 60 of us assembled at the gates of Ft. Benning for the first vigil in preparation for the upcoming action. By the 16th, the number of participants had grown until there were over 2,000 for a service to memorialize all those who have lost their lives at the hands of SOA graduates.

Following the service, those risking arrest walked

through the gates of Fort Benning in a memorial procession which was led by Father Roy Bourgeois and Carol Richardson who staff the SOA offices. They were followed by pall bearers carrying six coffins filled with petitions bearing the signatures of over one million people who are demanding that the School be closed. Then came the cross-bearers, two by two, carrying crosses inscribed with the names of those known dead.

We walked to the cadence of a funeral dirge. Nearly 600 people passed through the gates while the remaining 1,500 showed support.

After we had walked about a mile, we were arrested and loaded onto buses. We were taken far inside the base and dumped off in an open area where we waited to be searched. As we waited, we danced and sang peace songs. Then we stood on that cold, damp day for over an hour waiting for the soldiers to process us. We filled out forms and had mug shots taken. We were then loaded back on the buses and taken back to where many of our supporters waited.

Those who crossed for the first time were given "Ban and Bar" letters, saying that we were not to enter Fort Benning for one year. Those who had

already received the letters due to previous actions were ordered to appear in court on the following Wednesday. Of the 28 in this category, three elected to go before the magistrate for sentencing and received a six-month sentence and \$3,000 fine. They will go to prison in a few weeks. The rest entered "not guilty" pleas and will have a trial.

The question is why are we arrested for engaging in partisan activities on an open base. Why is asking that human rights abuses by our military be investigated a partisan act? On an open base shouldn't freedom of speech, not only be allowed, but also protected?

The question on the lips of Iowa peace activists is why are members of Iowa's congressional delegation, with the exception of Nussle and Leach, still voting for full funding of the SOA and why are they not co-sponsors of the bill to close the School? We must bombard them with letters and calls. It is unbelievable that Leonard Boswell, the lone Democrat in the Iowa congressional delegation, is not a co-sponsor and voted against cutting funding. Let's get busy! Let's keep on walkin', talkin', and writin' and close that School down!



Laurentian Shield

Nonviolent Disarmament of the Nuclear Navy in Wisconsin Donna and Tom Howard-Hastings

A married couple nonviolently disarmed and dramatically dismantled the ELF trigger for nuclear war located in northern Wisconsin. They were the 57th act of direct disarmament — "Plowshares" — undertaken by citizens since the first in 1980. Although they were convicted of property destruction, the couple was acquitted of charges of sabotage by a jury that heard unprecedented expert testimony, including that of a former commander of a United States strategic nuclear submarine, a former designer of submarine nuclear missiles, a peace historian, and a renowned international jurist.

This is the story of the action, the jail time and the trial, when Trident/ELF were found guilty of war crimes.

36 pages — photos

Free if you order *Swords into Plowshares*

Swords Into Plowshares

Second Edition

Edited by Arthur J. Laffin
and Anne Montgomery

This new and expanded edition of *Swords into Plowshares* includes a series of new articles and most of the original essays from the first edition. It exposes and confronts the nuclear empire which continues to expand despite the end of the Cold War. The book relates stories of nonviolent resistance and includes a complete chronology of Plowshares-Disarmament actions up to January 1996.

The book deals with the hot issues in the peace movement: why nonviolent resistance is an imperative to bring about disarmament, the connection between faith and resistance, and the challenges before us.

It also includes chapters on action, court, and prison, plus an outline of the history of nonviolent action and nonviolent responses to U.S. intervention in Central America, Iraq and Bosnia. The final section outlines the main tenets of U.S. nuclear and foreign policy in the post-Cold War era.

Contributors include: Bob Aldridge, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, Sam Day, Jim Douglass, Shelly Douglass, Elizabeth McAlister, Molly Rush, and a host of other activists.

364 pages — photos
1-879175-18-5

paper (retail \$18.00) sale price \$16.20

Remember prisoners of conscience

Editors' note: The following is reprinted from *The Nuclear Resister*. Please remember the women and men listed below who are imprisoned in North America for acts of resistance to a nuclear non-future.

Name ID# (if needed) (sentence)
prison or support address
(action & date — in or out date if known)

Steve Baggardy (13 months)
C/O Norfolk Catholic Worker
1321 W 38 St, Norfolk VA 23508

Tom Lewis-Borbely (6 months)
C/O Emma House

136 Austin St, Worcester MA 01609

Mark Colville (13 months)
C/O Cesar Jerez Catholic Worker
203 Rosette St, New Haven CT 06915

Phil Berrigan (2 years)

Susan Crane (27 months)

Steve Kelly SJ (21 months)

C/O Jonah House

1301 Moreland Ave, Baltimore MD 21216

"Prince of Peace Plowshares" direct

disarmament action of USS Sullivans, 2/14/97)

Leonard Peltier 89637-132 (life)
PO Box 1000
Leavenworth KS 66048
(Native American political prisoner)

Carl Kabat OMI 03230-045 (3 ½ years)
Teller Unit, POB 5000
Florence CO 81226-5000
(Violation of Parole from 1984 "Silo Pruning Hooks" Missouri missile silo disarmament action, due to "Good Friday April Fool Plowshares" disarmament of North Dakota nuclear missile silo, 4/1/94 - out 8/98)

Donna Howard-Hastings
Tom Howard-Hastings
12833 E St Hwy 13
Maple WI 54854
("Laurentian Shield" disarmament action at Project ELF, 4/22/96 - home monitoring - off 8/98)

For more information contact: *The Nuclear Resister*, PO Box 43383, Tucson, AZ 85733

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